



Bridgeton News

Corzine talks \$3.9M for bridge

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BRIDGETON -- With the bridge that will be replaced serving as the backdrop, U.S. Sen. Jon Corzine announced along the Riverfront Friday afternoon that \$3.9 million in federal funding will be coming back to the state to help fund the replacement of the Broad Street bridge.

Joined in a sweltering heat by fellow Democrats from the local, county and state levels, Corzine spoke of a city on the road to recovery, a city with many assets, namely the Cohanzyck Zoo and vast city park.

"We need to make sure that we keep that momentum going, and we need to be partners in that process. One of the ways we make that happen is to make sure that our transportation system fits together with all of the other ideas ... so commerce can flow easily," he said.

Corzine described the Route 49/Cohansey River bridge as both "insufficient" and "dangerous," built in an era that did not have the engineering expertise of the modern day.

The bridge replacement project, to be carried out by the state Department of Transportation, is slated to get under way sometime in late 2006, state Assemblyman Doug Fisher said.

The project is estimated to cost \$13.5 million, with completion expected by fall 2008, according to a press release from Corzine's office.

"(The bridge) is in a deteriorated enough state that we need to make sure we get the resources," Corzine said. "We've got safety considerations. We need structural renewal of the bridge. And it is a piece of economic development that is very important in conjunction with other arrangements along the river that will allow for further development."

In addition to its deteriorated condition, DOT has selected the bridge for replacement because it has deemed the roadway to be too narrow to handle the present volume of traffic and the curves leading onto it from both directions to be the cause of numerous accidents.

The \$3.9 million is part of a massive \$286.4 billion transportation bill -- the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2005 -- passed by the House and Senate on July 29. President Bush

signed it into law on Wednesday.

Corzine, the Democratic hopeful in New Jersey's gubernatorial race, took a moment to praise Sen. Frank Lautenberg, a fellow Democrat, and U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo, a Republican, for seeing to it that Bridgeton and other towns across the state will have their transportation needs addressed with the bill.

"I'm speaking for Sen. Lautenberg, who really played a major role in this, and Congressman LoBiondo. These kinds of things don't happen unless the congressional delegation works together," he said.

Mayor Michael Pirolli credited Fisher and Assemblyman John Burzichelli with helping to get this project moving at the state level.

"This is an example of all parts of the team working together. They prompted DOT to start this bridge program moving forward," Pirolli said.

Corzine responded to critics who have claimed the massive federal transportation bill was merely being used as pork, or an appropriation to garner political patronage.

"I don't like wasting money. I'm just like everybody else that thinks we need to hold our taxes down at the federal level, at the state level, at the local level. But you have to be able to invest back in our communities if you're going to have them be vital and growing in the future," he said.

While Corzine was quick to state that his visit to the city Friday was as a U.S. senator, not as a candidate for governor, Burzichelli didn't see a problem supporting his campaign -- or his own.

"Although this is not a campaign stop, I have great, great hope for what will happen when there's a reconfiguration in the Statehouse in Trenton and what we can do together as a team," he said.

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